

The city as an image. Kutna Hora.

To view and interpret a historical city as an image is a way of finding relationship to past from the position of presence and uncovering the ties of the physical and existential understanding of the city. At the same time using the concept of the image I want to clearly express that I talk about the physical (not social) image of the city. Physical image, namely architecture and spatial organization of cities I perceive as sources *in situ* and, in accordance with the art historian Pierre Francastel, as a result and part of system of figurative expression (thinking through image), which was established and developed parallel with the intellectual system. From the viewpoint of the presence the past of the city can be seen through prism of different concepts. I choose the concept of collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora), because I'm interested in not only what really happened but also what did not and should have or could have happened. I use the iconographic analysis and iconological methods of art history for content-interpretation of the symbolic meanings of architecture, urban planning and urban themes (in painting, drawing, in relief). I choose these subjects because of their relationship to reality and their long-lasting existence in memory. I consider these methods appropriate especially for interpretation of the cultural and historical memory (Jan Assmann). Cultural memory focuses on fixed points in the past, not the facts but symbolic figures, which hold the memories. Bearers of cultural memory are those who have the power to create and organize the physical image of the city, the others are only involved in it by their presence. Once bearers of one memory are lost, the memory is either forgotten or recomposed in a new form of collective memory - again, either cultural or historical. Memory presents a fundamental anthropological certainty, as it establishes the human community in its identity as a collective experience of the past. The content and meaning of collective memory expresses upon what the community bases its identity at a given time. Drawing references from architecture and urbanism for the meaning of the memory is problematic as well as a relationship between reality and image. Buildings and spatial organization of cities are an expression of the pragmatical memory, to a certain extent they reveal the ideas of efficiency, comfort and beauty, and of the capabilities and possibilities of man and his spatial behavior in the time and place; but also the mental images of the city shared by the society in that time. Collective memory is not directly dependent on the history of events, which happen at a faster pace, but on significant social changes. I want to show this on an example of Kutna Hora, the town that was hit by a number of known

historical (revolutions, wars, migrations) and local (loss of the original mining character) radical changes. Yet the idea of ideal city of Christian linear history of salvation – the historical and the heavenly Jerusalem - prevailed for more than five centuries in a dominant image

of the collective memory. Only at the turn of the 18th and 19th century this image was eventually covered by an idea of an important city for the history of the nation. Ideal identity - a collective memory of the Christian community was replaced by the ideal identity - a collective memory of the nation.